

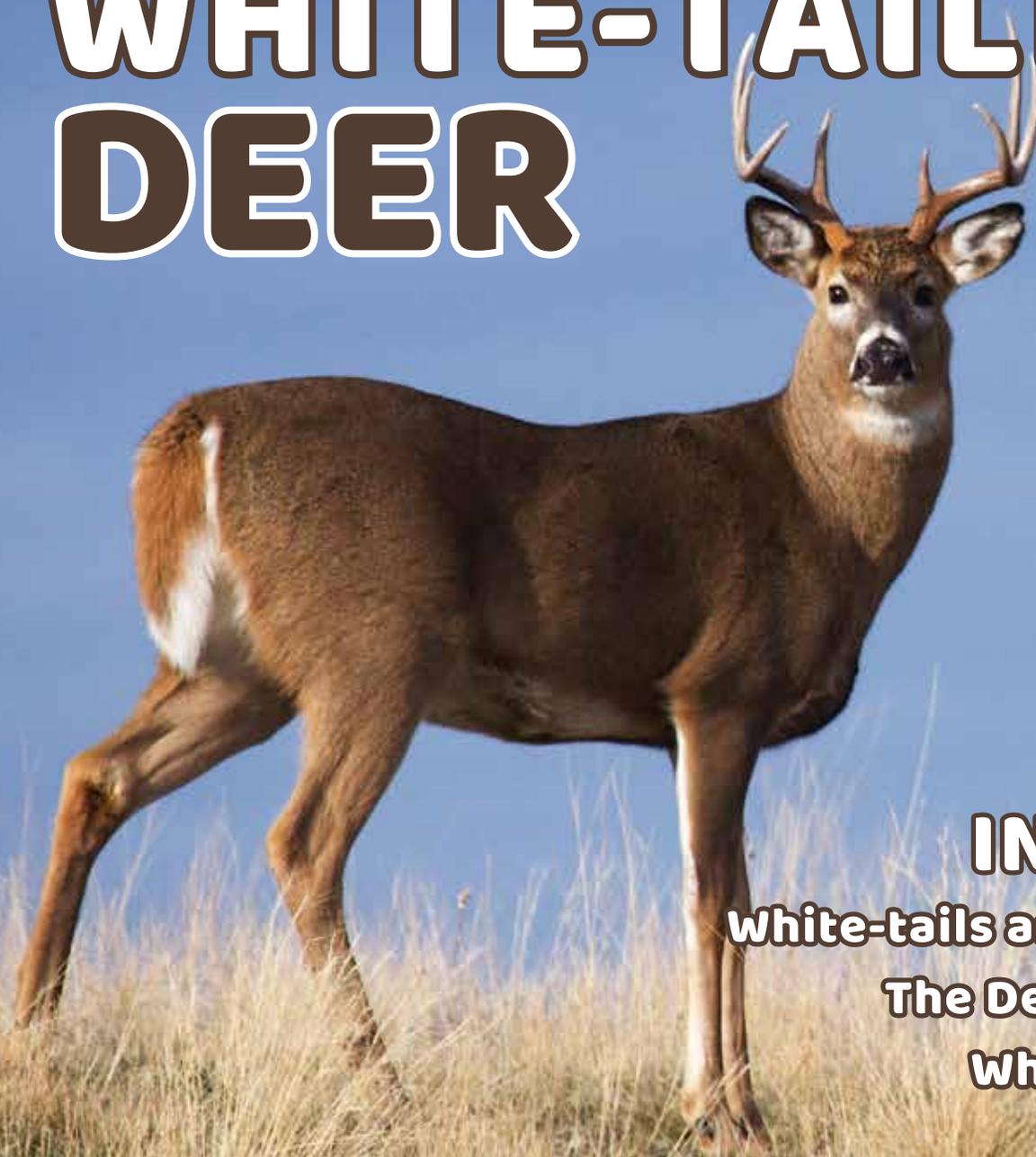


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White-tailed Deer

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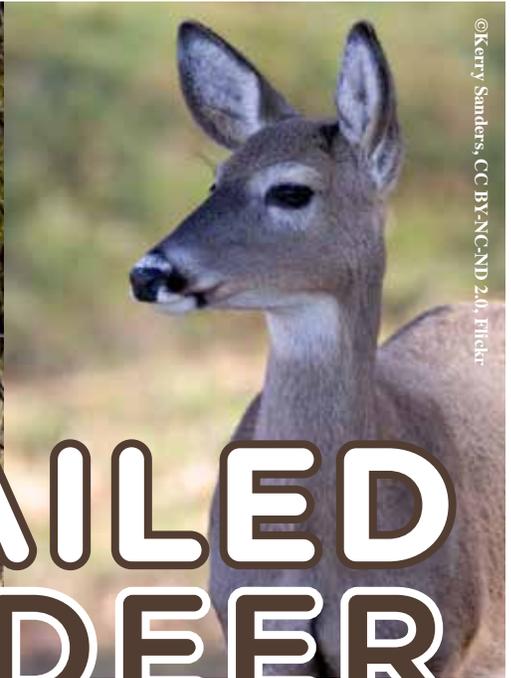
WHITE-TAILED DEER



INSIDE:
White-tails and Winter
The Deer Family
Which Deer?



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WHITE-TAILED DEER

Have you ever seen a deer running away that looked like it was waving “good-bye” with a bright, white tail? That was a white-tailed deer. When they get startled, they raise their tails and wave them back and forth. The tail looks a bit like a white flag. This is how a white-tailed deer warns others that danger is near. The white tail may also help young deer follow their mothers in thick brush and tall grass.

Where will you find white-tailed deer in Idaho? Get out a map of Idaho and find the Salmon River. White-tailed deer are mostly found north of the Salmon River but are becoming more common in central Idaho. They like woodlands, dense brush and marshy areas. They especially like the areas where different habitats meet, like the edges between meadows and forests. This is not a deer you are likely to find in the open desert. In southern Idaho, they may be found in riparian areas along some rivers. Riparian areas are the green areas along water where willows, grasses and trees grow.

White-tailed deer eat different plants at different times of the year. During the summer, they eat mostly grass and other soft plants. They might also cause problems by eating farmers’ crops. In the winter, they eat mostly shrubs. Willow, dogwood and chokecherry are some of their favorites.

White-tailed deer are smaller than Idaho’s other deer, the mule deer. Males, called bucks, average 200 pounds; females (does) average 125 pounds. The babies, called fawns, weigh between five and eight pounds when born in May or June. The female may have a single fawn or she may have twins. The fawns are kept hidden for the first week or two after being born. Their spotted, reddish-brown coat helps to hide the fawns while their mother is off eating. The mother doesn’t want to eat close to her fawns or a predator, like a coyote, might find them.

Coyotes eat more white-tailed deer than any other predator, but wolves, mountain lions, bobcats and black bears also eat white-tailed deer. White-tailed deer sure don’t want to be dinner for other animals, so they have developed some wonderful things to protect themselves. They have very good hearing to detect an approaching predator. When a white-tailed deer hears danger, it makes a loud snort that sounds a bit like a whistle. This is the sound that means “be alert, danger coming!” They also have that wonderful tail that waves like a white flag to alert others that danger is near. If a white-tailed deer eats well and avoids predators, it may live to be nine or 10 years old. Few white-tailed deer live past the age of 10.

Look and listen for white-tailed deer when exploring Idaho’s northern regions. They are a sleek, graceful and beautiful animal.

White-tails and Winter

I don't know about you, but I really don't enjoy standing outside when the snow is falling and the wind is howling and pelting snow against my face. Sometimes the snow feels like needles jabbing my skin! We risk death being outside in wild weather.

Wild weather also affects wild animals. Winter can be a hard time for animals. Cold temperatures and snow can make it difficult for animals to survive. They need to develop strategies to make it through the winter - white-tailed deer included.

One thing that affects the survival of white-tailed deer in the winter is the summer. Deer need to be good and fat when winter comes. They need a good summer habitat with lots of moist, rich grass and plants. A fat deer can make it through even the hardest winter. A skinny deer is almost sure to die.

During the winter, snow is the most important factor that affects white-tailed deer survival. Deep snow makes it difficult for deer to walk. The deeper the snow, the more energy a deer uses to get around. As little as two inches of snow can affect deer. They burn more energy from walking in the snow than they can get from eating winter foods. To avoid snow, white-tailed deer move down from the mountains to lower elevations - often below 3,000 feet where the snow is not as deep. They also use areas that face southeast and southwest. The sun hits these areas more, so snow melts faster and the deer get warmed-up by the sun. Some white-tailed deer also find shelter in thick forests. The dense tree branches offer protection from the snow, but there sometimes is a problem with a dense forest - less to eat. There are fewer shrubs and other plants in a dense forest. Sometimes deer end up eating Douglas-fir or western redcedar trees. The trees may fill the deer's stomachs, but there is little nutrition in the tree's needles. The best thing for a white-tailed deer is to find areas where there are dense forests next to more open areas where a wider variety of shrubs and other plants grow. Often it is a juggling act for a deer to find just the right mix of dense forests and open areas.

Next time you are warm and cozy in your house with a winter storm blowing outside, think of the deer and other wildlife. How do you think they are dealing with the weather?



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The

Deer Family



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Throughout the world there are about 40 different species (kinds) of deer. They are found on every continent except Antarctica and Australia. Africa has only one native deer, the red deer.

Deer come in many sizes. The smallest deer in the world lives in the Andes Mountains. The pudu stands about one foot tall and weighs less than 20 pounds. The biggest deer in the world is the North American moose. A male moose can weigh nearly 80 times more than the pudu – about 1600 pounds!

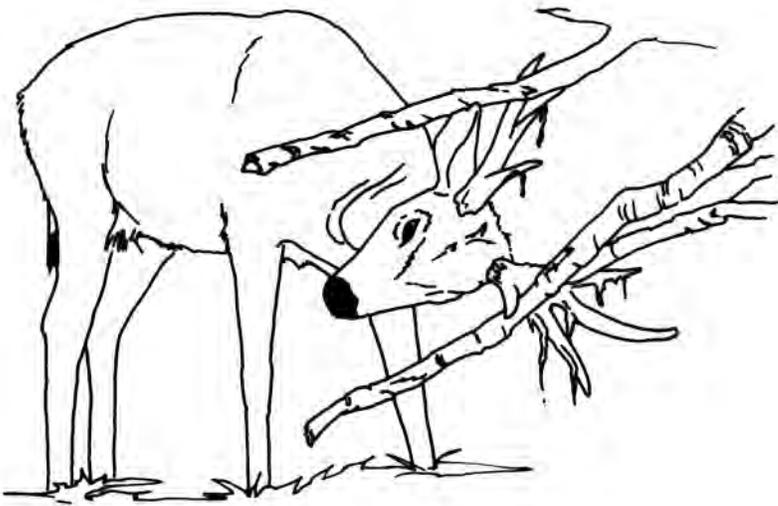
One thing all deer have in common is that they are ungulates (UN-gyu-lits). All ungulates have hooves. They are also herbivores; they eat plants. Grasses, leaves and twigs are tough to eat. To help them digest plants, ungulates have stomachs divided into four different chambers or rooms. They nip off plants, but they don't chew their food much before swallowing it. The plants go into the first chamber of the stomach. It is full of bacteria and other organisms that help break down the plants. Later, deer spit up the

food and chew it again. Have you ever heard of cows chewing their cud? They are chewing food regurgitated from their stomachs. Once chewed, the food is swallowed again and passes into the second and third parts of the stomach where water is taken out. The fourth chamber is the one that is most like your stomach. It absorbs the nutrients out of the food.

Having a stomach with many chambers not only allows deer to eat tough plants, it also helps to keep them safe. Many animals are at risk when they eat. Predators are more likely to see a deer eating in a clearing than hiding under a tree, so deer eat quickly. They nip off plants, chew them just a little and then swallow them. Once their first stomach is full, deer find a place to rest and hide. Now the deer can fully chew and digest their food, without having to constantly look out for danger.

Members of the deer family in North America include elk, moose, caribou, mule deer and white-tailed deer. Wherever you live in North America, you are likely to be near at least one.

AWESOME ANTLERS



point, he could actually bleed to death! Moose don't do much as their antlers are growing; they stay hidden and are not aggressive. Once the antlers have grown, the blood vessels in the velvet close off. The velvet dries up and starts to fall off. By September, the velvet has been completely rubbed off by the moose, and the antlers are hard and polished - ready to show off for the females and intimidate younger males. Moose shed their antlers in early winter and then immediately begin to grow another set. Then the process starts all over again!

Antlers grow on members of the deer family, like moose. They are bones that grow out of the animal's skull. An antler grows faster than any other kind of bone. It can grow up to one inch a day during the summer!

Usually antlers are only found on males. The one exception is caribou; both male and female caribou grow antlers.

Antlers are light and easily damaged until late summer. At this time, they are covered with a thin skin called velvet. Velvet is covered with fine, short hairs and contains thousands of blood vessels. The blood vessels carry calcium and minerals needed for building strong bones. If a moose damages his antlers badly at this



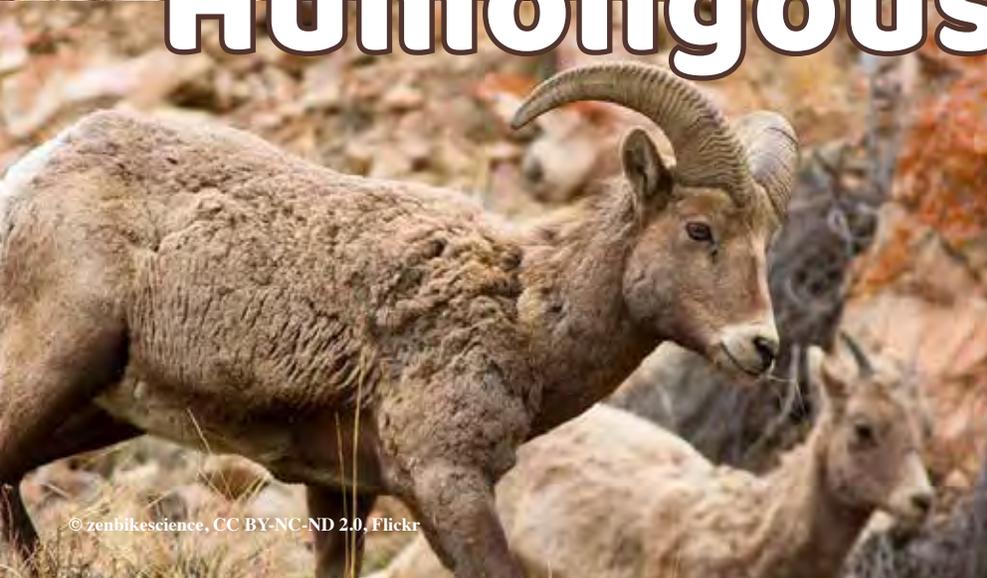


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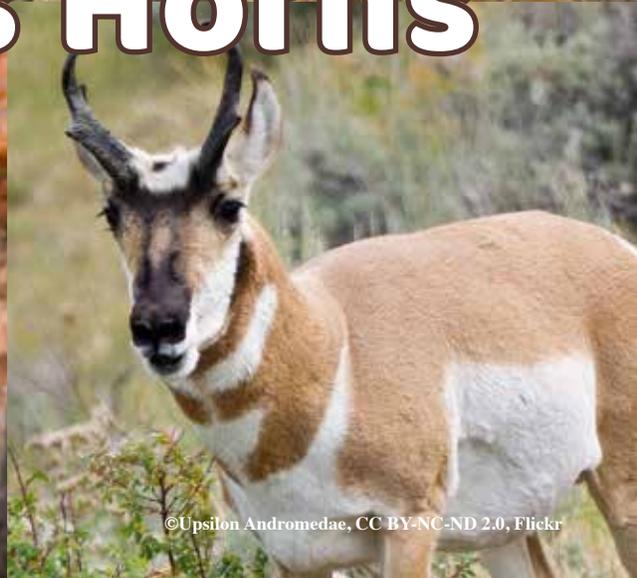


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HuMongous Horns



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Bighorn sheep, pronghorn, mountain goats, and bison all have horns. Horns are a bit different than antlers. How do you tell horns and antlers apart from each other?

Antlers often look like tree branches with a main beam and points coming off of the beam. Horns are usually not branched like antlers; they are shaped similar to the letters “C,” “J,” and “L.” Horns have two parts, a boney middle and an outer sheath. The inside part is bone that is attached to the skull. The outside of the horn, the sheath, is a covering made of a tough fiber-like material called keratin. Your fingernails and hair also contain keratin. What purpose does the sheath serve? It protects what’s underneath!

Both males and females may grow horns. Horns are permanent. In most cases, they continue to grow throughout an animal’s life. Pronghorns are an exception to this rule. A pronghorn will shed and re-grow its sheath each year.

If you take a close look at most horns, you may see rings or segments. Counting the rings will give you an idea of a bighorn sheep’s age. Bighorn sheep have many ridges and lines on their horns. As the horns grow they leave behind a ridge or line. The rings used for aging a bighorn are usually darker, a bit wider and go all the way around the horn. These rings are made during the winter. Horn growth slows down in the winter, and the stress of winter will often leave a mark on the horn. The area between these darker rings is called a segment. Lambs grow their first set of horns by six months and their second horn segment by 18 months. For rams, count the horn segments and subtract one. This will give you an idea of his age. Older rams often wear off the tips of their horns, so some people look for the four year ring. The ring left on the horn during a ram’s fourth year is usually darker and wider than rings left when the ram is younger. It can be difficult to determine the age of ewes by their horns. You may only be able to tell a ewe’s minimum age. Who knew you could learn so much just from a horn!

Which Deer?

Idaho has two different kinds of deer - white-tailed deer and mule deer. You need to be able to tell these two deer apart, especially if your family hunts. The way to tell them apart is as easy as a **STARE**: startled movement, tail, antlers, rump and ears.

White-tailed Deer

When startled, raise tail and show white "flag"

Flat, brown tail with white fringe and white underside

Antlers have tines all coming from large main beam

Brown rump

Small ears



Mule Deer:

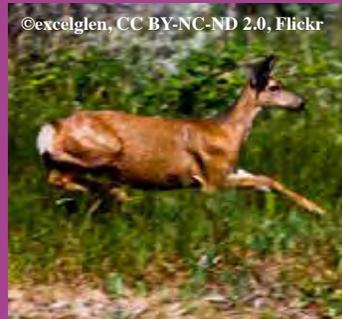
When startled, jump away on all four legs, called a "pronk"

Skinny, white tail with black tip

Antlers branch equally, separate beams fork into two tines forming a "V"

White rump

Large, mule-like ears





Be Outside...

It's Hunting Season

Fall is the time for cooler weather, colorful leaves and hunting season! Fall is often a hunter's favorite time of the year. Hunters go hunting for many reasons.

Filling a freezer with healthy meat is one goal. Venison is lower in calories and fat than beef. It also is higher in other things our bodies need, like iron and niacin. While all hunters hope to harvest an animal, spending time with family and friends is the best part of hunting.

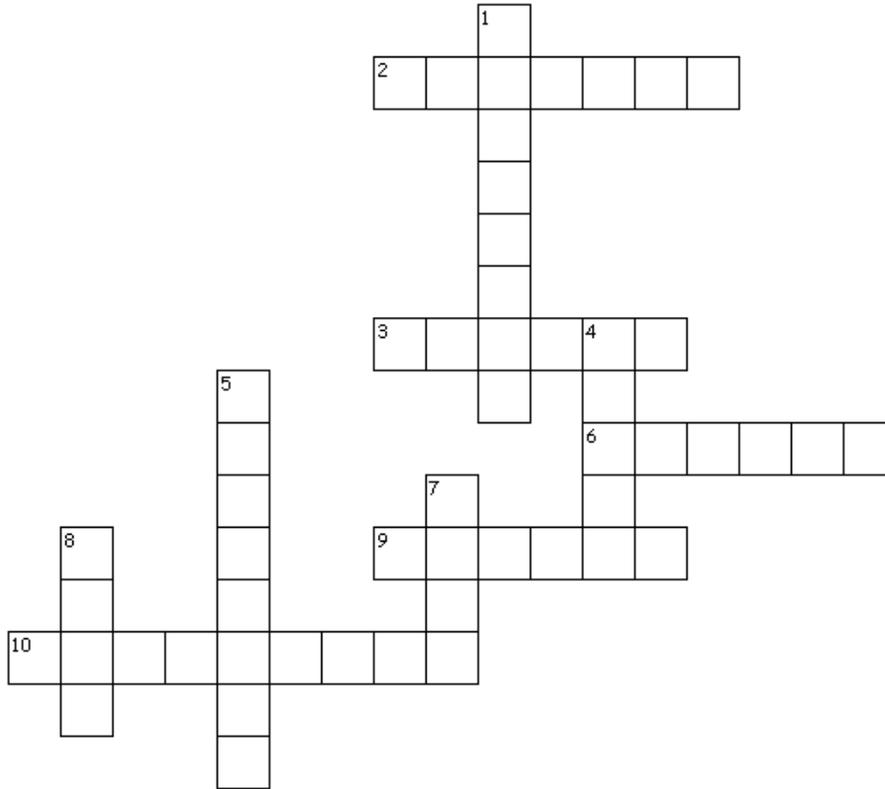
If you want to hunt, the first step is to take a hunter education class. You must pass this class to buy a hunting license. Anyone nine or older can take hunter education. Hunter education classes teach firearm safety. They also will help you learn to be a safe, responsible hunter. You will learn how hunting is important to wildlife management, and the important role hunters have played in protecting wildlife.

One of the best ways to learn about hunting is by going on hunting trips with family or friends. Even if you are not ready to hunt, you can learn a lot from other hunters. Help look for animals by finding tracks or scanning with binoculars. You can help carry equipment and find locations using a map and compass. If an animal is harvested, you can help pack it back to your camp. You can even learn to cook what has been harvested. All these experiences, along with hunter education, will help prepare you for your first hunt.



**Anyone nine or older
can take hunter education**

White-tailed Word Cross



- | Words |
|-----------|
| Bone |
| Bucks |
| Coyote |
| Does |
| Forest |
| Northern |
| Shrubs |
| Spotted |
| Startled |
| Ungulates |

Across

- A fawn's _____ coat helps it to hide from predators.
- During the winter, white-tailed deer mostly eat _____.
- This is a predator that likes to eat white-tailed deer.
- White-tailed deer like to live in a _____ with open areas.
- White-tailed deer are _____; animals that have hooves.

Down

- White-tailed deer are more common in the _____ part of Idaho.
- Male deer are called _____.
- When _____, white-tailed deer raise their tails and wave them back and forth.
- Female deer are called _____.
- Antlers are made of _____.

WILDLIFE EXPRESS

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WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

If you have a letter, poem or question for Wildlife Express,
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